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Middle East

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

POLICY PLANNING STAFF

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1952 JAN 8 PM 3 29

OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

January 8, 1952

S/P - Mr. Nitze

1. It is clear from the talks with Churchill that US and UK policies in the Middle East will be of outstanding importance during the immediate future. It is also clear that Egypt and Iran are the most critical areas and that our respective views as to the best policy toward those particular countries do not agree. There may be other points of difference, such as the nationality of a Commander for the Eastern Mediterranean, details in regard to the MEC, the contribution of the Commonwealth nations to the defense of the area and perhaps general attitudes in regard to the region as a whole.

2. I think we should explore the possibility of establishing a joint standing US-UK group to confer continuously on policy matters in regard to the Middle East. Such a group should be headed by a responsible high-ranking official on either side and might conduct its business somewhat along the lines of the combined Chiefs of Staff in the war. This may not be war but the emergency today justifies the adoption of measures of this kind.

3. The French undoubtedly would be dismayed at such a move and would be suspicious of its motives. However, we cannot afford to be guided by French susceptibilities. There is no reason why the two great English speaking nations of the world should not indulge in the closest kind of cooperation in matters vitally affecting the destiny of their peoples.

4. I believe the need for a permanent consultative body on the Middle East is well illustrated (a) by the apparent lack of knowledge of Mr. Eden the other day regarding latest developments on the IBRD plan in Iran, (b) the bold UK proposal that a U.S. battalion be stationed in the Suez area, and (c) the obvious need for practically daily consultation and cooperation between the British and ourselves on questions affecting the Middle East hot spots.

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5. The seat of such a consultative body in normal times would be Cairo, which was the center of our cooperation in the war. Naturally it would not be advisable to establish the group there now. It might be located on Cyprus. On the other hand, I would see no objection to setting it up in London or in Washington.

6. If we do not set up the mechanism for continuous consultation, it seems to me we should have an understanding for immediate consultation on an ad hoc basis either in London or here, along the lines of the visits which Michael Wright used to pay us when he was stationed in the Foreign Office. Ad hoc consultation is less satisfactory than a permanent arrangement, however, because much of the continuity in day-to-day problems is lost thereby.

HSV

Henry S. Villard

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S/P:HSVillard:mw